WOMONSPACE NEWS

VOL.1 NO. 7

The voice of Womonspace to the lesbian community of Edmonton

The above photograph, inscribed "We don't care if we do 1920", is from Tracy Moore's Lesbian Things collection. It was found in an Iowa junk shop. The photograph was reproduced in Sinister Wisdom no. 11, Fall, 1979 on page 64.

JULY '83.

Letter to the Editors:

May 27, 1983

OPEN LETTER TO BOOTS 'N SADDLE

We're outraged! Once again we have an example of the vicious sexism that has lead to deep splits between lesbians and gay men in Edmonton.

An article on lesbianism appearing in the May 25 Edmonton Journal has Conrad, manager of Boots 'n Saddle justifying why they ban women from this bar. We find that we are not allowed in his establishment because of the "fights and destruction" we cause. Quoted in the article he says, "Rather than have them destroy the place, we locked them out".

As two of the women interviewed by the Journal, we felt the article could be an important way of breaking down the invisibility and anonymity lesbians experience in Edmonton. A way of going out to the general public and dealing with the destructive stereotypes of lesbians. A way of reaching out to the many, many lesbians out there who are struggling with their sexual identities, thinking they are 'the only ones'. We're sure the other women interviewed had the same motivation.

And what do we find in the article? One of the most outrageous stereotypes of gay women ever dreamed up, put forward by one of our gay 'brothers'. We find the perpetuation of the myth that lesbians are emotionally crippled, tough 'bulldykes', always picking for a fight. Can't trust those lesbians you know!

Yes, we live in the real world. We know there are fights in bars. This is not surprising considering the combination of the emotionally-charged atmosphere, liberally mixed with alcohol.

We have seen some women, and yes, some men deal with their emotional problems with physical violence. This is unfortunate. People like this need our understanding. As GATE (Gay Alliance Towards Equality) peer counsellors, we volunteer our time to offer concrete assisstance to people who need help in dealing with these kinds of problems. We also offer referrals to professional therapists. There are some individuals, who if they persist in anti-social behaviour, need to be banned from these establishments.

Well, that takes care of a very, very small minority of the gay community. What about the rest of us?

If Boots 'n Saddle wants to have a men's only 'cruise bar', where men can pick each other up without the 'clutter' of women around, why don't they just say so. We really couldn't care less. But do they have to rationalize this with ignorant, anti-woman statements. We wonder if this discriminatory attitude would be swallowed so readily if it was directed at Blacks or Jews. We would hope that this type of racism wouldn't be tolerated. And neither should any type of sexism.

We are a small community in Edmonton, trying to survive in a rather hostile, backward political atmosphere. If we can't understand the basic necessity of working with, and not against each other, we are lost.

We would like to boycott Boots 'n Saddle, but since this is not technically possible, for obvious reasons, we are personally refusing in our capacity as GATE volunteers to 'recommend' this bar over our phone line. We would also call on the gay men in this community to boycott this bar. At the very least, make the owners of this establishment know what you think of their views. Maybe even the Edmonton gay male community can take some steps to move into a consciousness more appropriate to the 1980's.

Coreen Douglas

K.A. Baker

Kathy Baker

Activities ~

Dance: Womonspace dances are cancelled for the months of July and August. But we'll be back in September. Watch for more information.

Camp-out: Reservations have been made for a women's camp-out on July 15-17 at Jarvis Bay, Sylvan Lake. Rain or shine, it's going to be a super time! The cost is $3.00/person for the week-end -- bring your own supplies! Register by phoning Shane at 452-3416 before July 10. Don't know how to get there? Travel Alberta can help.

Softball: Everyone is welcome to come out and play FUN softball, Sundays from 2 to 6 pm at Mill Creek Elementary School, Diamond #2, 9735-80th Avenue.

COMMON WOMAN BOOKS

Alberta's Only Feminist Bookstore

non-sexist children's books
records * jewelry * t-shirts
fiction * feminist theory
overcoming male & female stereotypes
a good selection of lesbian literature

Tuesday & Wednesday: 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Thursday & Friday: 11 a.m. - 9 p.m.
Saturday: 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

8208 - 104 Street 432-9344

Dear Auntie Gae:

Dear Auntie Gae;
About a week ago, during coffee break, the women I work with were discussing birth control. Eventually they asked me what I was using. I haven't "come out" to anyone at work so I didn't know how to answer. What should I say if the subject comes up again?

Barren in Boyle

Dear Bar-B;
For heaven's sake, girl! Regardless of whatever phase you're presently going through, you should start using some kind of protection right away! You just never know when you'll meet Mr. Right. (And I assure you, you WILL meet him.) So call your doctor. And while you're at it, get some THERAPY before it's too late!

Dear Auntie Gae;
I have been with my lover for 17 years. Over that time we have bought a house, made a few small investments and planned for our retirement. I have recently become concerned that her right to inheirit what we have built together could be questioned. Is a Will enough protection?

Concerned in Calgary

Dear Conned;
Don't tell me that you've signed over to some room-mate all your worldly possessions! How did she talk you into that? A single woman has to be careful you know. Seeing that you have no family of your own, you'd be better off leaving your estate to even a distant relative. At least they would have a legitimate claim on your properties. Call your laywer right away. And while you're at it, get some THERAPY before it's too late!

All of us in Wonderland: How Local Lesbians Hit The Big Time

Chapter Five

Another day dawns in 'Frisco and this one is sunny!

"Quick," our friends chorus, "let's head for the park and take advantage of the weather."

I stroll over to where they have pounced on the city map. "We'll probably get a real education there too," I drawl knowingly.

All eyes are upon me.

"It's very cruisey..."

"For women?" asks P., very puzzled.

"No, no," I assure her, "of course not. Women don't do it in the bushes."

My lover raises one eyebrow and gives me a wink.

I ignore it.

"Well," shrugs P., "it's a big park. Surely the guys don't lay claim to all of it."

I agree.

"Do you know where the guys hang out?"

"Oh, I know how we can avoid them," I assure her. "I've been here before... remember?"

They nod and say in unison, "Once."

** Golden Gate **

"Well, we have to hand it to you," my friends chirp, "you certainly have managed to direct us away from the men's part of the park.

I nod absently at their beaming faces. I am busy trying to figure out which way is north on the map.

"But," they sigh, "we sure haven't been able to avoid all the other tourists."

I look up at the surrounding throng of nobby-kneed, flourescent-garbed, Nikkon-adorned wildlife. I wondered where their tour guide had hung himself.

Suddenly my lover gets sonething under her contact lens.

"Hold still," I say, cradling her head in my hands. "I'll try to see what it is." I peer deeply into her eye.

"George! Oh my... George, will ya look over there! Gays, George! Git the camera!"

One of the Bus 649 Tour Group has spotted us.

"Well, I'll be a sonofa...here, Doris. I can't git the cap off. Damn, I hope they hold still..."

"George, can you git the bridge in behind them? Wouldn't that be nice?"

We pucker up for George.

Karen

W O M O N S P A C E

Membership Application

WOMONSPACE is Edmonton's only non-profit social, recreational and educational resource group for lesbians. And we are run by our members. This means that as a member of WOMONSPACE, you have the unique opportunity to create as much as partake in social activities planned just for us. WOMONSPACE gives you a chance to share your skills and meet women with similar interests while contributing to a social community of our very own. As part of your membership application, please take the time to answer the following questions. It will help us better serve your needs in the future. All information that you entrust to WOMONSPACE is held strictly CONFIDENTIAL.

1. What activities would you like to see sponsored by WOMONSPACE?

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. What are your interests and hobbies? _____

   _____

3. What special skills or talents do you have? (eg: photography, typing, organizational, etc.) _____

4. What expectations do you have of WOMONSPACE? _____

   _____

   _____

5. Are you interested in volunteering? If so, in what capacity?

   _____

****

NAME:

ADDRESS:

MAILING ADDRESS:

PHONE:

AGE:

Please enclose your annual membership fee of ten dollars (10.00) and return to WOMONSPACE, c/o Every Woman's Place, 9926-112 Street, Edmonton. A membership card will be forwarded to you. Please do not send cash through the mail.

Food for Thought ~

Ending the Silence

Homophobia as Violence Against Women. Lesbian Pride. Two workshops that over thirty lesbians participated in at the "Ending the Silence" conference.

At the conference, held in our city May 27-29, 300 women alternately applauded, raged and cried as they listened to the two keynote speakers and participated in the forty workshops. A vivid, sometimes bleak picture was painted of violence in our culture, why we as women are so often victims of it and what we can do about it -- both personally and politically.

Kate Millet, a pioneer U.S. lesbian feminist, author of Sexual Politics as well as many other well-known fiction and non-fiction works addressed the conference, along with Debra Lewis, Vancouver feminist and co-author of Rape: The Price of Coercive Sexuality.

Women from Winnipeg (two van loads!), Regina, Saskatoon, Calgary (primarily from the Lesbian Mothers Defense Fund), and even a few from Edmonton (noticeably few!) participated in the two lesbian workshops. The discussion in the workshops was at times, very personal and soul-searching; political and heated; inspiring and moving.

We discussed personal experiences of coping as lesbians in a society that denies our very existance. We discussed the repercussions of coming out to family, friends, or on the job. We discussed how to replace self-oppression with self-esteem, pride and joy in who we are.

A lot of attention was paid to the hazards and rewards of participating as lesbians in the predominantly male gay organizations, in feminist groups, where lesbians are in a minority. We even discussed the problems of working in lesbian organizations that are not necessarily feminist in character.

We came from different backgrounds, in some cases even from different cities. Some of us were more 'out' than others, we had different experiences, were working in different organizations. Despite all this, coming together with a roomful of other lesbians, being able to speak a common language and identify with and learn from each other's stories left us all feeling changed in some way. We felt stronger, even revitalized as we left the conference and went off our separate ways.

Coreen Douglas
June 20, 1983

GATE
GAY ALLIANCE TOWARD EQUALITY

10173·104 St. EDMONTON (403)424-8361
·DROP-IN CENTRE
·PEER COUNSELLING
·SPEAKERS' BUREAU
·CIVIL RIGHTS
·SOCIAL EVENTS
·LIBRARY

Coming Events ~ Other Organizations

Women's Night: Every Thursday night is Woman's Night at GATE. 7-10 pm, 10173 - 104 Street. Everyone is welcome.

Every Women's Place: Pub Night has been cancelled.

Women's Club Night: Every Wednesday is Woman's night at The Roost. No cover charge. Happy Hour from 9-10 pm.

Further Info:

Submissions: Anything you want to see in this newsletter (and we'll take anything we can get) must be submitted no later than the 10th of every month. Contact Shane at 452-3416 or Karen at 439-1540, or mail submissions to "Womonspace News", c/o Every Woman's Place, 9926-112 Street, Edmonton.

Elections: Nominations for all offices have been postponed until the September general meeting. Elections will be held in October.

General meetings are held on the second Tuesday of every month at Every Woman's Place, 9926-112 Street. The next one is July 12, 7:30 pm.

Credits: Committee - Jeanne Rioux, Shane, Karen, Lindy Pratch, Candy, and Sheila
Design and Layout - Lindy

WOMANSPACE NEWS is published monthly by Womonspace Social and Recreational Society of Edmonton. WOMONSPACE is a non-profit, social, recreational and educational organization for lesbians in Edmonton. Mailing address: 'Womonspace News', c/o Every Woman's Place, 9926-112 Street, Edmonton, Alberta T5K 1L7